

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action of February 4, 2004, has been carefully considered.

It is noted that claim 14 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over German reference 4029058 to Mezger, in view of the patent to Mezger.

Claim 15 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Mezger, in view of Mezger, and further in view of German reference 3837256 to Zink.

Claims 25 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Mezger, in view of Mezger, and further in view of the patent to Kraus.

Finally, it is noted that claims 16-24 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In view of the Examiner's rejections of the claims, Applicant has canceled claim 15, and amended claims 14 and 16.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims now on file differ essentially and in an unobvious, highly advantageous manner from the constructions disclosed in the references.

Turning now to the references, these references have been discussed in some detail in the last filed Amendment. Those comments apply equally here and Applicant incorporates them herein by reference. The following comments are additionally provided.

The references do not teach the features recited in independent claim 14 presently on file. For example, there is no teaching by the references taken either alone or in any of the combinations argued by the Examiner of the outward drive shaft of the transmission being effectively connected to a wall of the engine housing, as recited in claim 14. Furthermore, in response to the Examiner's comments regarding the shaft 18 of DE 4029058 to Mezger, the Examiner states that the shaft 18 drives the wheels of the vehicle. However, the shaft 18 is only an extension of the shaft 13 and is called a "clutch shaft 18" in column 2, line 22 of Mezger. Therefore, the shaft 18 of Mezger is not comparable with input drive shafts 44, 46 of the present application since once end of each input drive shaft 44, 46, according to the present invention is directly connected to one of the wheels of the vehicle. In contrast to this, the shaft 18 of Mezger is only connected to the output shaft 13 at one end and to the transmission shaft 19 at the opposite end thereof. If one were to consider this shaft 18 of Mezger as driving the wheels of the vehicle, one would also have to consider the fuel tank as driving the wheels of the vehicle. In

other words, Applicant submits that the Examiner's position that the shaft 18 is for driving the wheels is not the way one skilled in the art would interpret the reference. The references also do not teach, either alone or in combination, the arrangement of the planes of the shafts as now recited in claim 14 together with the other features contained in the claim.

In view of these considerations, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections of claims 14, 15, 25, and 26 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are overcome and should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

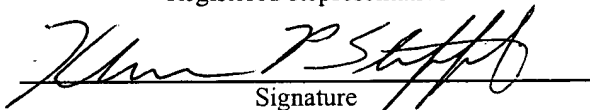
In the event the actual fee is greater than the payment submitted or is inadvertently not enclosed or if any additional fee during the prosecution of this application is not paid, the Patent Office is authorized to charge the underpayment to Deposit Account No. 15-0700.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on May 4, 2004:

Respectfully submitted,

Klaus P. Stoffel

Name of applicant, assignee or
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Signature

May 4, 2004

Date of Signature


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